

Shortgrassers Have Been Trying To Relate To Environment All Along

By Monte Noelke

2-19-70

Page 10

MERTZON — Ecology is the popular subject today. Hombres who couldn't pass the seventh grade course in physical science are speaking wistfully of relating living organisms to the environment. Newspaper editors are scolding their keyboards, denouncing air and water pollution. Politicians are so preoccupied with the battle that the production of new taxes is way down.

A crusade of cleanliness is sweeping the country. Woe be it to citizens with oil burning cars or smoking furnaces.

The Shortgrass Country remains calm. I don't think ecology means the same thing to us as it does to city folks. Shortgrassers have been trying to relate living creatures to this environment for a long time. Untold dollars and much time have been spent attempting to make the livestock live without having their snoots in a feed sack all winter long. Cattle have been crossed and recrossed, sheep bred and rebred, in hopes of discovering a breed that would live off the land instead of from a trough.

Our ecologying hasn't netted much. We never have found a critter that didn't end up thinking a feed wagon was his mother from November to late April. The stock would relate fairly well during the temperate months, but come the frigid ones and the whole livestock community has always collapsed on our hands.

Old cows in particular grew so sack-broke that they'd start moaning for cottonseed cake before the swimming pools closed over in town. Sheep did better than the cattle, but none of the woolies put their heart into adjusting to the season.

As this situation became known, range specialists arrived on the scene. Right off, they began preaching that we were ruining our country. What they didn't see, however, was that the country was ruining us just as fast as were ruining it. The topsoil wasn't fading away, but there sure wasn't any population explosion of new ranchers. People weren't relating any better than the livestock. If anything, I'd say the four-legged inhabitants were getting the best end.

Fouling of the air and water didn't get a chance to work into our brand of ecology. Problems on the ground kept everybody so busy that they didn't notice minor things like rivers drying up or oil companies letting salt water leach into the soil.

When a man gets to relating his environment with \$75 a ton feed, he doesn't have time to take in the overall picture. The best song writer in the country can't think up any new funeral dirges if he has to be at burying every day.

It would have been hard for us to keep our minds on fresh air anyway. An abundance of fresh dry air has always been our principal resource. In many a dry year we've had acres and acres of fresh air. All the cattle in Texas could have been run in this one locality without a single case of suffocation.

In fact, if we could have developed an animal that thrived on air instead of feed, this relating to the environment business never would have bothered us.

Nevertheless, smogs and smudges and scums are desecrating the countryside and befouling the cities. A few years back, man was hell-bent on anything that came under the name of progress; today he's faced with paying for same.